

# Notes on Stand-Alone *Yung*-Nominalizations in Tagalog<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper reports on a recently developed use of nominalizations with *yung* in Tagalog, namely, the use of *yung*-nominalizations in sentences such as *Yung lumingon ka pero hindi naman ikaw ang tinatawag* ‘That moment when you look back and realize that it was not you who were called’. This is a stand-alone event nominalization, where a whole sentence is nominalized and the resulting nominalization is used as a main clause. It cannot only describe an event but also convey the speaker’s emotion and attitude toward the event described, such as embarrassment and sarcasm. While this new use of *yung*-nominalizations has not yet been documented, it is widely observed on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. In this paper, I will offer a preliminary description and analysis of this emerging use of *yung*.

## 1. Nominalization with *yung*

Tagalog is an Austronesian language of the Philippines and is spoken in and around the Metro Manila region. This language is a predicate-initial language with a consistent VO word order. That is, clauses are headed by verbal or nonverbal predicates that appear clause-initially, and noun phrases are preceded by articles or prepositions that express the semantic relation of a noun phrase to its predicate.

Tagalog has two articles, *ang* and *yung*, for the nominative case. In most cases, the two articles are employed interchangeably, as in (1) and (2).<sup>2</sup> Note that *yung* is glossed as NOM.DIS here: *yung* is derived from the distal demonstrative pronoun in the nominative case *iyon* followed by the linker =*ng* (Reid 1978).

- |     |                                |             |  |        |     |        |
|-----|--------------------------------|-------------|--|--------|-----|--------|
| (1) | Matalino                       | ang/yung    |  | babae. |     |        |
|     | smart                          | NOM/NOM.DIS |  | woman  |     |        |
|     | ‘The woman is smart.’          |             |  |        |     |        |
| (2) | P<um>asok                      | ang/yung    |  | babae  | sa  | bahay. |
|     | AF:enter                       | NOM/NOM.DIS |  | woman  | LOC | house  |
|     | ‘The woman entered the house.’ |             |  |        |     |        |

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<sup>2</sup> The following abbreviations are used in this paper: AF-actor focus, ANT-anterior, CAUS-causative, CEX-counter-expectation, CF-circumstantial focus, DIS-distal, FUT-future, GEN-genitive, IPFV-imperfective, LF-locative focus, LIN-linker, LOC-locative, NEG-negator, NMLZ-nominalizer, NOM-nominative, P-personal name, PF-patient focus, PFV-perfective, PROS-prospective, SG-singular, SP-spontaneous, PL-plural, 1-first person, 2-second person, 3-third person, “<”-infix, “=”-cliticization, and “~” reduplication. The diagraph *ng* represents a velar nasal.

In Nagaya (2011), I argued that *ang* and *yung* are not used in exactly the same way. One of the differences between *ang* and *yung* that I pointed out in that paper is that *yung* has an extended nominalization function that *ang* does not. In other words, there are some instances when *yung* can nominalize what *ang* cannot. See the examples in (3) and (4) for an illustration of this difference.

- (3) Kumusta      yung      kagabi?  
 how            NOM.DIS   last.night  
 ‘How was the one that happened last night?’
- (4) Ipakita      mo      sa      akin      yung      naka-barong Tagalog      ka.  
 CF:CAUS:see 2SG.GEN LOC      2SG.LOC NOM.DIS wear.barong.Tagalog      2SG.NOM  
 ‘Show me the one (e.g., a picture, a movie clip, etc) in which you wore a barong Tagalog.’

In (3), *yung* not only marks the nominative case, but also nominalizes the temporal expression *kagabi* ‘last night’. The nominalized expression *yung kagabi* refers to whatever can be characterized by *kagabi* ‘last night’. It can represent, for example, a party that was held last night or an exam that the speaker took last night. Similarly, in (4), in addition to marking the nominative case, *yung* indicates that the full clause *naka-barong Tagalog ka* ‘you wore a barong Tagalog’ is a nominalized expression. The nominalized expression *yung naka-barong Tagalog ka* is used to refer to a picture, a movie clip, a painting, or the like, in which the hearer wears a barong Tagalog. In both cases, the nominalized expressions serve as some sort of referential point to an entity or event that is unknown or not specified.

Importantly, *ang* cannot be used in place of *yung* in these examples. In other words, *ang* cannot nominalize the temporal expression *kagabi* in (3) or the full clause *nakabarong Tagalog ka* in (4). Thus, (5) and (6) are ungrammatical.

- (5) \*Kumusta ang kagabi? (cf. (3))  
 (6) \*Ipakita mo sa akin ang naka-barong Tagalog ka. (cf. (4))

Nagaya (2011) suggested that this nominalization function of *yung* is a relatively recent development in the Tagalog grammar. In fact, *yung* is still expanding its function in various directions and obtaining new usages. This paper looks into one of such new uses of *yung* emerging as an Internet meme in Tagalog-speaking online communities, especially on social networking sites. See (7), for example.

- (7) **Yung** na-type      mo      yung      password mo      sa      email mo.  
 NMLZ SP:PF:PFV:type 2SG.GEN NOM.DIS password 2SG.GEN LOC email 2SG.GEN  
 ‘(It is funny when) you accidentally type your password in the email address field.’

There are two occurrences of *yung* in (7). The first *yung* is used to nominalize the following sentence. The second *yung* indicates the noun phrase *password mo* ‘your password’ is in the nominative case and is an argument of the verb *natype* ‘accidentally type’. In this paper, I am concerned with the first *yung* and will gloss

this *yung* as NMLZ in the rest of this paper.

From a structural point of view, the example in (7) consists of one nominalized sentence with *yung*. What is nominalized here is the sentence *na-type mo yung password mo sa email mo*. The analysis that the entire sentence is nominalized is borne out by the fact that it can occur as an argument of an adjectival predicate. For an example, see (8), where the underlined argument corresponds to (7).

- (8) Nakakatawa yung na-type mo yung password mo  
 funny NMLZ SP:PF:PFV:type 2SG.GEN NOM.DIS password 2SG.GEN

sa email mo.

LOC email 2SG.GEN

‘That moment when you accidentally type your password in the email address field is funny.’

Semantically, the nominalized expression in (7) is an event nominalization conveying the speaker’s emotion or attitude towards the event described. It does not simply refer to the event of someone typing his or her password in the “email address” box; it also means that the speaker felt embarrassed about this particular event.

This use of *yung*-nominalization is widely and frequently observed on social networking sites and other forms of online communication. Unfortunately, however, this use of *yung* has not yet been documented or described and has been receiving little attention in the literature. The purpose of this paper is to present a description and analysis of this new use of *yung*-nominalization. Section 2 describes this new use in detail. Similar construction types in other languages are identified in Section 3, followed by a conclusion in Section 4.

Before the analysis, a note on the data is in order. As mentioned earlier, this use of *yung* is developing as an Internet meme, though it may be possible to find instances of this type of nominalization in everyday conversation. For this reason, the data examined in this paper were collected from tweets posted through public accounts on Twitter.<sup>3</sup> Each example was posted as a single “tweet” and thus can be considered as constituting a single utterance, whether it appears truncated or not. When the examples were cited, the original informal spelling convention was maintained unless it causes confusion. The free translations of the examples are based on my language consultants’ interpretations of them.

## 2. Stand-alone *yung*-nominalizations

Let us first observe several examples of *yung*-nominalizations. Consider examples in (9) through (11).

- (9) Yung na-pa-sigaw ka ng “para” sa MRT.  
 NMLZ SP:AF:CAUS:shout 2SG.NOM GEN stop LOC MRT  
 ‘(It’s embarrassing when) you shout “para” in an MRT (Metro Manila Rail Transit).’

<sup>3</sup> Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging service that enables users to send and read short 140-character text messages, called “tweets” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twitter>, retrieved on July 3, 2014).

- (10) Yung na-gets mo yung lesson nyo sa math.  
 NMLZ SP:PF:PFV:get 2SG.GEN NOM.DIS lesson 2PL.GEN LOC math  
 ‘(It’s happy when) you understand the lesson in a math class.’
- (11) Yung p<um>asok ka sa EXIT.  
 NMLZ AF:enter 2SG.NOM LOC EXIT  
 ‘(It’s embarrassing when) you enter through the EXIT.’

The *yung*-nominalization in (9) describes an embarrassing moment after the speaker mistakenly shouts the expression *para* in an MRT (i.e., a train). The word *para* ‘stop’ is typically used to ask local bus drivers to stop so that passengers can get off<sup>4</sup> and is not used on trains. For this reason, shouting such a phrase in an MRT is embarrassing. Although there is no specific word that expresses embarrassment in the sentence, this *yung*-nominalization as a whole conveys the embarrassment that the speaker felt toward the event.

Likewise, the examples in (10) and (11) mean that the speaker feels happy and embarrassed, respectively, about the event described in the nominalized sentence. Again, there are no explicit expressions of emotion in these examples, but such interpretations are obtained when these nominalized sentences are situated in the context of the encyclopedic knowledge shared by Tagalog speakers.

This use of *yung*-nominalization has three characteristics of interest. First, a whole sentence is nominalized in this type of nominalization. Sentences that are nominalized with *yung* can be simplex ones, as in (9) through (11), but can also be complex ones, as in (12) through (15).

- (12) Yung l<um>ingon ka  
 NMLZ AF:look.back 2SG.NOM  
  
 pero hindi pala ikaw yung t<in>a~tawag.  
 but NEG CEX 2SG.NOM NOM.DIS PF:IPFV:call  
 ‘(It’s embarrassing when) you look back but it was not you who were called.’
- (13) Yung puro “oo” ka na lang  
 NMLZ only yes 2SG.NOM PFV just  
  
 kahit hindi mo naman na-i~intindih-an mga p<in>ag-sa~sabi niya.  
 even.if NEG 2SG.GEN indeed SP:LF:IPFV:understand PL PF:IPFV:say 3SG.GEN  
 ‘(It’s funny when) you say only “yes” even if you don’t understand what he/she is saying.’
- (14) Yung s<um>igaw ka, tapos tahimik yung iba=ng tao.  
 NMLZ AF:shout 2SG.NOM then silent NOM.DIS other=LIN person  
 ‘(It’s embarrassing when) you shout but other people are silent.’

<sup>4</sup> A note on public transportation in the Philippines is in order. The phrase *para* ‘stop’ is for the local bus service called *jeepney*. Jeepneys carry passengers on a (relatively) regular route, and there are no bus stops for this service in most cases. Thus, passengers can get off wherever they want. One of the ways to ask a driver to stop is to shout *para*.

- (15) Yung patay na patay ka sa crush mo, bading pala!  
 NMLZ dead LIN dead 2SG.NOM LOC crush 2SG.GEN gay CEX  
 ‘(It’s funny when) you have a huge crush, (but it turns out that) he’s gay.’

In (12), what is nominalized with *yung* is a complex sentence consisting of two clauses. The two clauses are coordinated by means of the conjunction *pero* ‘but’. In (13), a complex sentence with an adverbial subordinate clause is nominalized with *yung*. The main clause is followed by the adverbial subordinate clause headed by the conjunction *kahit* ‘even if’. What is nominalized in (14) is two independent sentences loosely connected by means of the linking adverb *tapos* ‘then’. Lastly, in (15), *yung* nominalizes two clauses juxtaposed without any overt connecting element.

More examples of nominalized complex sentences are given in (16) through (19).

- (16) Yung p<in>a-pa-tawa ka ng mga kaibigan mo  
 NMLZ CAUS:PF:IPFV:laugh 2SG.NOM GEN PL friend 2SG.GEN  
 habang <um>i~inom ka.  
 while AF:IPFV:drink 2SG.NOM  
 ‘(It’s funny when) your friends try to make you laugh while you’re drinking.’
- (17) Yung na-kasama at na-pansin ka ni crush.  
 NMLZ SP:PF:PFV:accompany and SP:PF:PFV:pay.attention 2SG.NOM P.GEN crush  
 ‘(It’s exciting when) your crush<sup>5</sup> accompanied and paid attention to you.’
- (18) Yung Monday pa lang, pagod ka na agad.  
 NMLZ Monday still only tired 2SG.NOM already immediately  
 ‘(It’s sad when) it’s still Monday (but) you’re already tired.’
- (19) Yung <um>uwi ka ng gabi tapos hindi ka p<in>a-galit-an.  
 NMLZ AF:go.home 2SG.NOM GEN night then NEG 2SG.NOM LF:PFV:scold  
 ‘(It’s awkward when) you got home late (but) then you were not scolded.’

Second, this type of *yung*-nominalization is a stand-alone nominalization. Namely, the *yung*-nominalizations examined in this paper occur independently without being embedded in a main clause. In other words, these nominalized expressions by themselves constitute a full-fledged sentence rather than a fragmented or truncated portion of a complete sentence. In fact, these nominalized expressions appeared as single posts on Twitter, indicating that Tagalog speakers treated them as independent utterances.

Needless to say, if necessary, these stand-alone nominalizations can occupy syntactic positions in which nouns are supposed to appear. For example, it is possible to use the *yung*-nominalization in (12), as an argument of a predicate. Consider the example in (20). It is an adjective-predicate clause, whose subject argument corresponds to the *yung*-nominalization in (12).

<sup>5</sup> In (Filipino) English, *crush* refers to a person on whom you have a crush (i.e., toward whom you feel romantic attraction).

- (20) Nakakahiya yung l<um>ingon ka  
 embarrassing NMLZ AF:look.back 2SG.NOM

pero hindi pala ikaw yung t<in>a~tawag.

but NEG CEX 2SG.NOM NOM.DIS PF:IPFV:call

‘It’s embarrassing that you look back but it was not you who were called.’

Lastly and equally importantly, this stand-alone nominalization with *yung* does not only describe an event but also conveys the speaker’s emotion associated with the event described or an attitude that the speaker has toward the event. Although the emotion itself is not explicitly expressed in any part of the sentence, it can be inferred from the encyclopedic knowledge in which the sentence is embedded and the context in which it is uttered. The emotion conveyed can be different kinds of emotion, such as amusement, frustration, disappointment, sadness, and embarrassment. It is sometimes difficult to determine what kind of emotion the speaker is trying to imply. But in other cases, a stand-alone *yung*-nominalization is followed by expressions evaluating it, as in (21).

- (21) Yung tiwala=ng tiwala ka sa sarili mo=ng  
 NMLZ believe=LIN believe 2SG.NOM LOC self 2SG.GEN=LIN

tama yung sagot mo,  
 correct NOM.DIS answer 2SG.GEN

s<in>igaw mo pa, mali pala! Pahiya!  
 PF:PFV:shout 2SG.GEN even wrong CEX embarrassing

‘(That moment when) you believe in yourself and are sure that your answer is correct, you even shout it out, (but you realize) it was wrong! It’s embarrassing!’

To conclude, in this section, I have pointed out three important characteristics that are associated with stand-alone *yung*-nominalization. First, what is nominalized with *yung* is an entire sentence, whether it be simplex or complex. Second, the *yung*-nominalizations in question constitute their own sentence by themselves. Lastly, stand-alone *yung*-nominalizations not only describe an event but also convey the speaker’s attitude toward the event described. These three features can be found only in this type of *yung*-nominalization in Tagalog.

### 3. Stand-alone nominalizations across languages

This new use of *yung*-nominalization often reminds Tagalog speakers of the *that moment when* construction in English, which is another widely used Internet expression. For instance, see the examples in (22) through (24).

- (22) That moment when you realize it’s easier to end a friendship than to work on it.

- (23) That moment when you realize you are not white.  
 (24) That moment when you are the only person left in the department and it turns out that school has been cancelled and no one told you.

The *that moment when* construction in English is similar to the stand-alone *yung*-nominalization in Tagalog insofar as both constructions are stand-alone nominal expressions with some sort of emotional effects. They are also similar with regard to the existence of a distal demonstrative pronoun: the distal demonstrative pronoun *that* is used in the *that moment when* construction, while *yung* in Tagalog is a shorter version of the distal demonstrative *iyon* ‘that’ and the linker. Since Tagalog speakers are exposed to English on an everyday basis, it is not unreasonable to speculate that the stand-alone *yung*-nominalization construction discussed above was brought about under the influence of English Internet memes.

Indeed, Tagalog has translated equivalents of the English *that moment when* construction and similar expressions, as illustrated in examples in (25) through (27). The stand-alone *yung* nominalization can be easily “derived” from these examples by “deleting” the head noun (i.e., *moment* and *feeling*) and the linker *na*.

- (25) Yung moment na gusto na=ng t<um>ulo ng luha mo  
 NOM.DIS moment LIN want already=LIN AF:drip GEN tears 2SG.GEN

pero p<in>i~pigil-an mo lang.  
 but LF:IPFV:prevent 2SG.GEN only

‘That moment when your tears are about to fall, but you’re trying to stop (them).’

- (26) Yung feeling na kung kailan ka haggard,  
 NOM.DIS feeling LIN whether when 2SG.NOM haggard

tsaka mo ma-sa~salubong yung crush mo.  
 furthermore 2SG.GEN SP:PF:PROS:run.into NOM.DIS crush 2SG.GEN

‘That feeling that when you look haggard, you will run into your crush.’

- (27) Yung feeling na na-ta~tawa ka sa seryoso=ng sitwasyon.  
 NOM.DIS feeling LIN SP:AF:IPFV:laugh 2SG.NOM LOC serious=LIN situation

‘That feeling that you (accidentally) laugh in a serious situation.’

At the same time, however, it is also cross-linguistically common and natural that nominalized expressions are used as independent sentences and obtain some sort of emotional and attitudinal meanings. For example, Horie (2011) points out that, in Japanese, clausal nominalizations with *⇒no* can convey some discourse-pragmatic meanings (e.g., offering explanation and confirmation). See (28) for an example.

- (28) Hayaku iku no.  
 quickly go NMLZ

‘Will you leave early?’ (lit. Is it that you leave early?) or

‘Please leave soon.’ (lit. It is that you leave quickly.)



Tibeto-Burman languages are well-known for their versatile nominalizations. In these languages, main clauses can be nominalized, yielding to some semantic/pragmatic effects. In Lahu, for example, nominalized main clauses have an effect of making them a statement of fact. See the example in (29) (Matisoff 1972: 247).

- (29) *yo la tu ve.*  
 he come FUT NMLZ.  
 ‘It is the case that he will come.’

Noonan (2011) also reports that in Tamangic languages of the Sino-Tibetan family, nominalizations appear as main clauses with a mirative sense, as in the following example from Chantyal.

- (30) *bənnu-ye nal tato ta-si-wa*  
 gun-GEN barrel hot become-ANT-NMLZ  
 ‘The barrel of the gun had become hot!’

Indeed, Tagalog has a construction type where a single noun phrase marked by *yung* is used as an independent main clause, as in (31) and (32). Similar to the stand-alone *yung*-nominalizations examined in Section 2, these stand-alone nominals are often found on Twitter and other social networking sites.

- (31) *Yung bestfriend na su~suportah-an ka sa kagagahan*  
 NOM.DIS best.friend LIN LF:PROS:support 2SG.NOM LOC foolishness

*at kalokohan mo.<sup>6</sup>*  
 and insanity 2SG.GEN  
 ‘That best friend who will support you in your foolishness and insanity.’

- (32) *Yung mga tao=ng nag-po~post ng English*  
 NOM.DIS PL person=LIN AF:IPFV:post GEN English

*tas mali yung spelling at grammar.*  
 then wrong NOM.DIS spelling and grammar  
 ‘Those people who post in English but whose spelling and grammar are wrong.’

Structurally speaking, in each of these examples, a *yung*-marked nominal is followed by a noun-modifying clause, being linked by means of the linker *na/=ng*. Semantically, they not only refer to an entity but also convey some kind of emotion associated with the entity referred to. These examples indicate that, in Tagalog, *yung*-marked nominal expressions can be used as independent clauses and convey some emotive and attitudinal meanings.

To summarize, there are several possible factors that make the stand-alone *yung*-nominalization

<sup>6</sup> Interestingly, the well-known subjects-only constraint on relativization is violated in this example.



discussed in this paper possible in Tagalog. On the one hand, it is not unreasonable to hypothesize that this new use of *yung* may have been brought about under the influence of the English *that moment when* construction. On the other hand, it is also typologically common that stand-alone nominals or nominalizations have emotive and attitudinal meanings.

#### 4. Final remarks

In this paper, I reported on a recently developed use of *yung*-nominalizations in Tagalog. It was demonstrated that it is a stand-alone event nominalization that conveys the speaker's emotion or attitude towards the event described. It was also mentioned that, although it could have been influenced by the *that moment when* construction in English, using nominalizations as independent sentences with some pragmatic effects is a typologically common phenomenon. This paper was the first attempt to describe this new use of *yung* in Tagalog.

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## タガログ語の *yung* による名詞化の主節用法について

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### 要旨

本論文ではタガログ語の *yung* による名詞化の主節用法について分析する。具体的には、*Yung lumingon ka pero hindi naman ikaw ang tinatawag*. 「振り向いたけれど、呼ばれていたのは自分じゃなかった!!」のような文における *yung* 名詞化について報告する。この用法は、主節として用いるタイプの名詞化であり、文全体が名詞化されている。事態だけではなく、事態に対する話者の感情や態度（たとえば悲しみや落胆）も表現する。この *yung* を用いた名詞化の新しい用法はまだ記述されていないが、Twitter や Facebook などのソーシャルネットワーキングサービスにおいて頻繁に用いられている。

(ながや・なおのり 東京外国語大学)